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ABSTRACT

This report presents data on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Puerto Ricans in the mainland United States and makes comparisons between the social, educational, and economic characteristics of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic and ethnic groups and the total United States population. All data were taken from reports, studies, and surveys conducted by the government and national research organizations. Characteristics presented for the general Puerto Rican population and for special target groups (women, young people, and families) include: population, age, education, income, labor force participation, employment, unemployment, poverty, welfare, and health. The data indicate that Puerto Ricans are the most disadvantaged ethnic group in the mainland United States. An addendum compares data for Puerto Ricans in New York City with national data. (Author/MK)

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# THE NEXT STEP TOWARD EQUALITY

A Comprehensive Study of Puerto Ricans
In the United States Mainland

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# THE NEXT STEP TOWARD EQUALITY

A Comprehensive Study of Puerto Ricans
In the United States Mainland

Prepared by:
Program Development Unit
Career Services and Job Placement Program
National Puerto Rican Forum
September, 1980

This report has been prepared by the Program Development Unit of the National Puerto Rican Forum, using public and original data and analyses. The National Puerto Rican Forum should be given credit when all or parts of this report are used by other parties.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents data on the demographic, social and economic characteristics of Puerto Ricans in the mainland United States and makes comparisons between the social, educational and economic characteristics of Puerto Ricans, other Hispanic and ethnic groups, and the total U.S. population. All data, as indicated by the footnotes, are taken from reports, studies and surveys conducted by the government and national research organizations. Characteristics presented for the general Puerto Rican population and for special target groups such as women, youth and families, include: population, age, education, income, labor force participation, employment, unemployment, poverty, welfare and health.

The National Puerto Rican Forum compiled the data for this comprehensive report because government agencies and private organizations lack overall information about the needs and characteristics of the Puerto Rican population in the mainland United States.

The National Puerto Rican Forum is a non-profit social service organization dedicated to the socio-economic improvement of the Hispanic community. Headquarters are in New York City.

## RESEARCH ABSTRACT

### Characteristics That Tell Why Puerto Ricans Are the Most Disadvantaged Ethnic Group in the Mainland United States

#### Population

The median age of the 1,748,000 Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mainland in March, 1979, was 19.9 years, the lowest of all ethnic groups. The median age of Puerto Rican males in March, 1978, was 17.9 years.

#### Puerto Rican Families

There were 434,000 Puerto Rican families in the U.S. mainland in March, 1979, down from 437,000 in March, 1978. 95.8 percent resided in metropolitan areas. 39.5 percent had incomes below the poverty level, but 41.2 percent of those living in metropolitan areas were in poverty. In March, 1978, 41.0 percent of Puerto Rican families were headed by females, with 74.6 percent of these families living in poverty. 86.4 percent of children under 18 years of age, in Puerto Rican families headed by females in metropolitan areas, were in poverty.

#### Education of Puerto Ricans

In 1978, only 31.9 percent of the mainland Puerto Rican population 14 years of age or older were high school graduates. Of 171,000 Puerto Rican females in the labor force, 45.6 percent had less than 3 years of high school education, and of 301,000 Puerto Rican males in the labor force, 60.3 percent completed less than 3 years of high school education. 48.4 percent of Puerto Rican heads of families in poverty completed only 8 years or less of elementary school, while overall, 91.9 percent completed less than 3 years of high school education.

#### Income of Puerto Ricans

In March, 1979, the median income of Puerto Rican families was $8,282, or 47 percent of the median national income of $17,640, and lower than the median family incomes of all other ethnic groups in the mainland. 58.0 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of less than $9,999, and 74.0 percent had incomes of less than $14,999.

#### Labor Force Participation of Puerto Ricans

In March, 1979, 50.7 percent of the Puerto Rican population were in the labor force: 78.5 percent of the Puerto Rican male population; 36.4 percent of the Puerto Rican female population; and 31.4 percent of the Puerto Rican youth population.

#### Employment of Puerto Ricans

In 1979, fewer Puerto Ricans were employed (458,000) than in 1978 (475,000). Puerto Ricans held proportionately more low-occupational jobs than other U. S. or Hispanic workers (22 percent were operatives, and 22 percent were service workers).

#### Unemployment Among Puerto Ricans

In March, 1979, 10.5 percent of Puerto Rican workers 16 years old and over were unemployed, compared to 5.6 percent of all U.S. workers. 29 percent of the 48,000 Puerto Rican youths 16 to 19 years old, in the labor force, were unemployed.

#### Poverty and Welfare Among Puerto Ricans

In 1977, there were 707,000 Puerto Rican individuals, or 38.8 percent of the Puerto Rican population, living below the poverty level; 39.5 percent of Puerto Rican families were in poverty, with 49.7 percent of Puerto Rican families with related children under 18 years of age in poverty.

70.3 percent of Puerto Rican female heads of families were in poverty; 74.6 percent of Puerto Rican families headed by females were in poverty. In 1977, Puerto Ricans constituted 33.4 percent of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) caseload in New York City and 24.5 percent of the caseload in New York State.

## Puerto Rican Women

In March, 1978, 32.5 percent of Puerto Rican women 20 years of age and over were in the labor force, a lower percentage than that of women of all other ethnic groups. In March, 1979, there were 179,000 Puerto Rican females in the labor force, and 10.6 percent were unemployed. The median income of Puerto Rican women was $4,179, but 62.2 percent of Puerto Rican women had incomes of less than $5,000. 92.8 percent had incomes of less than $10,000 while 99.1 percent had incomes of less than $15,000.

## Puerto Rican Youths

In 1977, 37,000 Puerto Rican families were headed by individuals 14 to 24 years of age, and 51.4 percent of those families were in poverty. 57.1 percent of all Hispanic youths who were out of school were not high school graduates, and the percentage for Puerto Rican youths is even higher. In 1979, 31.2 percent of Puerto Rican youths 16 to 19 years of age were in the labor force, a slight rise from 1977, when 30.3 percent of that age were in the labor force. 29.2 percent were unemployed.

## Health of Puerto Ricans

In New York City, Puerto Ricans had a higher mortality rate from cirrhosis of the liver, drug addiction, accidents, homicides, and diabetes, than the total New York City population. The rate of admissions of Puerto Ricans to community mental health and mental retardation facilities was higher than for other groups. The percentage of visits by Puerto Ricans to outpatient departments of hospitals was lower than for other groups.

## A. GENERAL POPULATION DATA

### 1. Number of Puerto Ricans in U.S. Mainland

In March, 1979, there were 12.1 million persons of Hispanic origin in the United States mainland: 7.3 million Mexican-Americans; 1.7 million Puerto Ricans*; 800,000 Cubans; 2.2 million Central and South Americans and persons of other Spanish origin. [1]

From 1970 to 1978, the Puerto Rican population grew by 27.5 percent.[2] In March, 1978, there were an estimated 1,823,000 Puerto Ricans in the U.S. mainland, compared to the 1970 census count of 1,429,396. [3] While Hispanics lead the minorities in growth rate, [4] the Puerto Rican community is the fastest growing Spanish-origin ethnic group.[5]

* Puerto Ricans have generally been undercounted in the census, and more dramatically so in estimates based on population samples. [Statement, page 3, Bureau of Census, Persons Of Spanish Origin in the United States, March, 1979, (Advanced Report), Series P-20, No. 347]

### 2. Age of Mainland Puerto Rican Population

The Puerto Rican ethnic group is the youngest ethnic group in the mainland U.S. In March, 1979, the median age of Puerto Ricans was 19.9 years, compared to 29.8 years for the total U.S. population, 22.0 years for all Hispanics, 21.1 years for Mexican Americans, 36.3 years for Cubans, 25.5 years for Central and South Americans, and 30.4 years for individuals not of Spanish origin.[6]

The Puerto Rican population has a heavy concentration of young people, particularly young males. In March, 1978, the median age of Puerto Rican males was 17.9 years, compared to 28.5 years for the total U.S. male population, 21.4 years for all Hispanic males, 21.2 years for Mexican-American males, 35.5 years for Cuban males, and 25.9 years for Central and South American males. [7]

The median age of Puerto Rican females was 22.4 years, compared to 30.6 years for the total U.S. population, 22.8 years for all Hispanics, 21.3 years for Mexican-Americans, 37.7 years for Cubans, 27.3 years for Central and South Americans, and 23.4 years for other Spanish origin. [8]

In March, 1979, the Puerto Rican community in the mainland was comprised of 935,000 females (54.2%) and 813,000 males (45.8%).[9]

Of Puerto Rican males, in March, 1978, 39.0 percent were under 13 years of age; 17.1 percent were between 14 and 21 years of age; 29.1 percent were between 22 and 44 years of age; 45.3 percent were over 21 years of age.[10]

Of Puerto Rican females, the same years, 34.8 percent were under 13 years of age; 14.6 percent were between 14 and 21 years of age; 35.8 percent were between 22 and 44 years of age; 51.8 percent were 21 years of age or older.[11]

Overall, in March, 1978, the age distribution of the Puerto Rican population of an estimated 1,823,000 persons was: 11.3 percent under 5 years of age; 25.4 percent between 5 and 13 years of age; 12.9 percent 14 to 19 years of age; 24.2 percent 20 to 25 years of age; and 26.3 percent over 35 years of age. 65.4 percent of the total Puerto Rican population were 29 years of age and younger, compared to 40.6 percent for the total U.S. population.[12]

Given the special problems faced by youths, it is important to note that in March, 1979, 52.3 percent of the Puerto Rican population were 21 years of age and younger, in constrast to 34.6 percent of the total U.S. population, 47.7 percent of the total Hispanic population, 49.5 percent of the Mexican-American population, 32.4 percent of the Cuban population, 40.3 percent of the South and Central American population, and 33.9 percent of non-Hispanic populations.

3. Distribution of Puerto Ricans in U.S. Mainland

The majority of Puerto Ricans reside in the central cities of metropolitan areas. In March, 1975, over 62 percent of the mainland Puerto Ricans resided within a 400-mile radius of New York City, but shifts in Puerto Rican populations have established new settlements and expanded older ones. In 1970, there were 872,471 Puerto Ricans in New York State, 105,262 in New Jersey, 86,482 in Illinois, 44,555 in Pennsylvania, 36,305 in Connecticut, 24,394 in Florida, 6,769 in Michigan. However, Puerto Rican communities have been established or expanded in most major cities and towns in the Eastern Seaboard, Central, Southwestern and Southeastern States.[13]

## B. FAMILY DATA

1. Residence of Puerto Rican Families

In March, 1979, there were 434,000 Puerto Rican families in the mainland United States: 95.8 percent resided in metropolitan areas; 79.2 percent resided in central cities in those areas. In contrast, 66.7 percent of all U.S. families resided in metropolitan areas and 27.0 percent in central cities. Mexican-American families were distributed as follows: 85.4 percent resided in metropolitan areas; 51.1 percent resided in central cities; 14.6 percent resided in non-metropolitan areas.[14]

2. Marital Status

In 1978, of the 504,000 males and 650,000 females 14 years of age and over in the mainland Puerto Rican community, 55.3 percent of the males and 56.4 percent of the females were married; 38.7 percent of the males and 27.2 percent of the females were single; 1.6 percent of the males and 10.6 percent of the females were divorced.[15]

3. Puerto Rican Families, U.S. Mainland: Size and Composition

Besides being younger, Puerto Rican families had a lower median family income and a higher rate of poverty than all U.S. families and all Spanish-origin families as well.

In March, 1978, the mean number of Puerto Rican persons per family was 3.78: 24.3 percent of Puerto Rican families consisted of 2 persons; 22.3 percent of 3 persons; 24.1 percent of 4 persons; 17.3 percent of 5 persons; 5.8 percent of 6 persons; and 6.2 percent of 7 or more persons. In comparison, 34.2 percent of U.S. families consisted of 2 persons, 19.5 percent of 3 persons, 18.5 percent of 4 persons, 13.1 percent of 5 persons, 6.7 percent of 6 persons, and 8.0 percent of 7 persons or more.[16]

In March, 1978, 41.0 percent of Puerto Rican families were headed by females. While 39.5 percent of all Puerto Rican families were in poverty, 74.6 percent of Puerto Rican families headed by women were in poverty. (See section on "Women Data" for comparisons of Puerto Rican families to other families.)[17]

## C. EDUCATION DATA

Persons of Puerto Rican origin had a significantly lower educational level of attainment than other persons in the U.S. and Hispanic populations.

1. Attainment

In 1978, whereas 31.9 percent of the Puerto Rican population 14 years old and over were high school graduates, 38.9 percent of Hispanics, 34.1 percent of Mexican-Americans, and 52.6 percent of other Hispanics 14 years old and over were high school graduates.[18]

Also, of 1,154,000 Puerto Ricans 14 years old and over, 10.9 percent completed 0 to 4 years of elementary school, 15.1 percent completed 5 to 7 years of elementary school, and 13.2 percent completed 8 years of elementary school. A slightly larger percent, 28.9 percent, completed 1 to 3 years of high school, 21.5 percent completed 4 years of high school, 10.4 percent completed high school and one or more years of college, 7.3 percent completed 1 to 3 years of college, 3.2 percent completed 4 years of college. [19]

2. Barriers to Employment and Education

In March, 1978, of 301,000 Puerto Rican males in the labor force, 33.8 percent completed 8 years or less of elementary school, 26.5 percent completed 1 to 3 years of high school, 28.8 percent completed 4 years of high school, 7.3 percent completed 1 to 3 years of college, and 3.6 percent completed 4 or more years of college. [20]

In March, 1978, of 171,000 Puerto Rican females in the labor force, 27.5 percent completed 8 years or less of elementary school, 18.1 percent completed 1 to 3 years of high school, 42.1 percent completed 4 years of high school, 8.2 percent completed 1 to 3 years of college, and 4.1 percent completed 4 years or more of college. [21]

In 1977, among Puerto Rican heads of families 25 years of age and over (400,000), a large percentage, 48.4 percent, completed only 8 years or less of elementary school, compared to 22.2 percent of U.S. heads of families in poverty, 29.2 percent of similar Hispanic heads of families, 25.6 percent of Mexican-American heads of families, and 27.6 percent of other Spanish-origin heads of families who completed only 8 years or less of elementary school. [22]

On the whole, compared to other groups, a significantly larger percentage of Puerto Rican heads of families in poverty had no high school education, or completed only a few years of high school. 43.5 percent of Puerto Rican heads of families in poverty completed only 1 to 3 years of high school, compared to 19.9 percent of similar U.S. heads of families, 26.4 percent of similar Hispanic heads of families, 23.5 percent of Mexican-American heads of families, and 15.9 percent of other Spanish-origin heads of families. [23]

3. Language Barriers: Education Related

While 10 percent of persons (ages 14 to 25) with English-language backgrounds were high school dropouts, 40 percent of those in this age group with language-minority backgrounds and who usually speak their native languages were high school dropouts. [24]

Hispanics who usually speak Spanish dropped out at a higher rate (45 percent) than persons in the aggregate of other language minorities who usually speak their native languages (30 percent). [25]

Compared with that of persons with English-language backgrounds, the dropout rate was 4.5 times as high for Hispanics who usually speak Spanish, and 3 times for those of other language backgrounds who usually speak their native languages (30 percent). [26]

The dropout rate for persons with non-English-language backgrounds who usually speak English (12 percent) was close to the rate for those with English-language backgrounds (10 percent), but differed substantially from the rate for those who usually speak their native languages (40 percent). [27]

D. INCOME DATA

In March, 1979, the median income of Hispanic families ($12,566) was significantly lower than that of non-Hispanic families ($17,912), and the median income of Puerto Rican families ($8,282) was lower than for all other groups. [28]

1. Income of Families

In March, 1979, the median income of Puerto Rican families was $8,282, compared to $17,640 for all U.S. families, $10,879 for all Black families, $12,566 for all Hispanic families, $12,835 for Mexican-American families, $15,320 for Cuban families, and $14,272 for other Spanish-origin families. [29]

In March, 1979, 15.8 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of less than $4,000, compared to 5.6 percent of all U.S. families, 9.6 percent of all Hispanic families, 9.3 percent of Mexican-American families, 5.0 percent of Cuban families, 6.8 percent of other Spanish-origin families, and 5.3 percent of all non-Hispanic families. 30

28.2 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of $4,000 to $6,999, compared to 8.7 percent of U.S. families, 14.2 percent of all Hispanic families, 11.7 percent of Mexican-American families, 10.6 percent of Cuban families, 11.5 percent of other Spanish-origin families, and 8.4 percent of all non-Hispanic families. 31

In 1977, 27.7 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of less than $5,000. Of all Puerto Rican families with incomes of less than $5,000, 64.7 percent had no wage earners, 12.0 percent had one wage earner, and 2.4 percent had two wage earners. 32

39.4 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of less than $10,000. Of all Puerto Rican families with incomes less than $10,000, 35.3 percent had no wage earners, 46.9 percent had one wage earner, and 12.5 percent had two wage earners. 33

In the same year, 55.6 percent of Puerto Rican families had incomes of less than $15,000. Of all Puerto Rican families with incomes of less than $15,000, 23.0 percent had one wage earner and 32.4 percent had two wage earners. 34

In 1959, Puerto Rican family earnings were 71 percent of the national average, but by 1974, Puerto Rican family earnings dropped to only 59 percent of the national average, and continued to drop. By 1979, Puerto Rican family earnings were 47 percent of the national average. In 1959, 45 percent of Puerto Rican families had two wage earners, but by 1970, 20 percent had no earners, and by 1977, 35.3 percent had no wage earners. Generally, Puerto Rican families were worse off in 1979 than ten years earlier. 35

2. Income of Workers

In 1977, the median income of Puerto Rican persons, 14 years old and over, was $5,445. At the time, 46.4 percent of Puerto Ricans had incomes of less than $5,000, 78.8 percent had incomes of less than $10,000, and 89.7 percent had incomes of less than $15,000. 36

The median income of Puerto Rican males was $8,051: 29.4 percent had incomes of less than $5,000; 59.7 percent had incomes of less than $10,000; and 80.2 percent had incomes of less than $15,000. 37

The median income of Puerto Rican females was $4,179: 62.2 percent of Puerto Rican females had incomes of less than $5,000; 92.8 percent had incomes of less than $10,000; and 99.1 percent had incomes of less than $15,000. 38

## E. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION DATA

Compared to other groups, Puerto Ricans had a lower rate of participation in the labor force. While adult Puerto Rican males in the labor force enjoyed employment rates approximating other ethnic groups, they had longer durations of unemployment and a higher rate of unemployment than other groups. 39

1. Total Labor Force Participation

In 1979, 50.7 percent (512,000) of the Puerto Rican population were in the labor force. In comparison, 63.9 percent of the U.S. population, 64.2 percent White, 61.2 percent Black, 63.9 percent Hispanic, 66.9 percent Mexican-American, and 65.2 percent Cuban, were in the labor force. 40

2. Males in the Labor Force

78.5 percent (285,000) of the Puerto Rican male population 20 years and over were in the labor force, compared to 79.5 percent of the U.S. male population, 80.0 percent White, 76.1 percent Black, 85.1 percent Hispanic, 87.7 percent Mexican-American, and 84.9 percent Cuban. 41

3. Females in the Labor Force

36.4 percent (179,000) of the Puerto Rican female population 20 years and over were in the labor force, compared to 51.7 percent of the U.S. female population, 51.0 percent White, 56.0 percent Black, 48.6 percent Hispanic, 49.1 percent Mexican-American, and 54.5 percent Cuban.[42]

4. Youths in the Labor Force

31.2 percent (48,000) of the Puerto Rican youth population 16 to 19 years were in the labor force. In comparison, 55.8 percent of the U.S. youth population, 59.2 percent White, 36.2 percent Black, 51.2 percent Hispanic, and 58.1 percent Mexican-American, were in the labor force.[43]

F. EMPLOYMENT DATA

In 1979, the employment rate of Puerto Rican workers was less than in 1978. In comparison, all other groups had more workers in 1979 than in 1978.

1. Rate of Employment

In 1978, 470,000 Puerto Rican workers 16 years and older were employed; in 1979, there were 458,000. In 1978, 287,000 Puerto Rican male workers 20 years old and over were employed; in 1979, there were 284,000. In 1978, 184,000 Puerto Rican female workers were employed; in 1979, there were 179,000. In 1978, 48,000 Puerto Rican youths 16 to 19 years were employed; in 1979, there were still 48,000.[44]

2. Occupations and Employers

In 1979, of the 458,000 Puerto Rican workers, 90,000 were government employees, 347,000 were in private industries, and 16,000 were self-employed. 397,000 workers worked full-time, 13,000 worked part-time for economic reasons, and 48,000 worked part-time for non-economic reasons.[45]

Compared to the total U.S. population, Puerto Ricans had a higher rate of employment as operatives and laborers, and had a higher incidence of seasonal employment and a longer duration of unemployment.

In 1979, of the 458,000 Puerto Rican workers employed, 9 percent were professional, technical and kindred workers, 5 percent were managers and administrators, 4 percent were sales workers, 19 percent were clerical workers, 22 percent were operatives, 9 percent were craft and kindred workers, 6 percent were laborers, 3 percent were transport equipment operators, and 22 percent were service workers.[46]

In comparison, of 98,049,000 U.S. workers, 16 percent were professional, technical and kindred workers, 11 percent were managers and administrators, 7 percent were sales workers, 18 percent were clerical workers, 11 percent were operatives, 13 percent were craft and kindred workers, 5 percent were laborers, 4 percent were transport equipment operators, and 13 percent were service workers.[47]

Of 512,000 Puerto Rican workers in the labor force, 38 percent were white-collar workers, 40 percent were blue-collar workers, and 22 percent were service workers. In comparison, of 98,049,000 U.S. workers, 51 percent were white-collar workers, 33 percent were blue-collar workers, and 13 percent were service workers.[48]

In 1978, 293,000 Puerto Rican males 16 years old and over were employed: 26.2 percent were white-collar workers; 52.3 percent were blue-collar workers; 19.8 percent were service workers; and 1.7 percent were farm workers.[49] In comparison, 53,865,000 U.S. males were employed: 51.7 percent were white-collar workers; 32.3 percent were blue-collar workers; 13.5 percent were service workers; and 2.6 percent were farm workers.[50]

In 1978, 173,000 Puerto Rican females 16 years old and over were employed: 56.3 percent were white-collar workers; 30.9 percent were blue-collar workers; 11.9 percent were service workers; and 0.9 percent were farm workers. [51] In comparison, 38,099,000 U.S. females were employed: 6[illegible].9 percent were white-collar workers; 14.5 percent were blue-collar workers; 20.5 percent were service workers; and 1.1 percent were farm workers. [52] However, only 36.4 percent of the Puerto Rican female population are in the labor force, compared to 51.7 percent of the U.S. female population. (See section on "Labor Force Participation Data: Females in the Labor Force.")

## G. UNEMPLOYMENT DATA

In 1979, Puerto Rican men, women, and youth, were less likely to be employed than their counterparts. Unemployment for these segments of the Puerto Rican population exceeded the national employment rate, and Puerto Ricans had the highest rate of unemployment among Hispanic groups.

### 1. Total Unemployment

In March, 1979, of 512,000 Puerto Rican workers 15 years old and over in the labor force, 10.5 percent were unemployed. In contrast, 5.6 percent of U.S. workers, 4.9 percent White, 11.4 percent Black, 8.6 percent Hispanic, 9.1 percent Mexican-American, and 6.6 percent Cuban, were unemployed. [53]

### 2. Male Unemployment

In 1979, of 285,000 Puerto Rican males 20 years old and over, 7.2 percent were unemployed, compared to 4.0 percent of U.S. males, 3.5 percent White males, 8.8 percent Black males, 5.8 percent Hispanic males, 5.8 percent Mexican-American males, and 4.7 percent Cuban males. [54]

### 3. Female Unemployment

In 1979, of 179,000 Puerto Rican females 20 years old and over, 10.6 percent were unemployed, compared to 5.5 percent of U.S. females, 4.8 percent White females, 9.9 percent Black females, 9.8 percent Hispanic females, 11.2 percent Mexican-American females, and 6.6 percent Cuban females. [55]

### 4. Puerto Rican Youth and Adult Unemployment

In March, 1978, the unemployment rate of Puerto Rican persons 16 years old and over was 11.7 percent, compared to 6.6 percent for the total U.S. population, 9.5 percent for Hispanics, 9.6 percent for Mexican-Americans, 6.9 percent for Cubans, and 9.0 percent for other Spanish-origin persons. [56a]

In March, 1978, the unemployment rate of Puerto Rican males 16 years old and over was 11.5 percent, compared to 6.3 percent for U.S. males, 9.0 percent for Hispanic males, 8.6 percent for Mexican-American males, 8.6 percent for Cuban males, and 8.7 percent for other Spanish-origin males. [56b]

Also in March, 1978, the unemployment rate of Puerto Rican females 16 years old and over was 12.2 percent, compared to 7.0 percent for U.S. females, 10.4 percent for Hispanic females, 11.4 percent for Mexican-American females, 4.4 percent for Cuban females, and 9.5 percent for other Spanish-origin females. [56c]

### 5. Youth Unemployment

In 1979, of 48,000 Puerto Rican youths 16 to 19 years old, approximately 29 percent were unemployed. In 1978, of an estimated 59,000 Puerto Rican youths, 29.2 percent were unemployed. [57] In comparison, 15.7 percent of U.S. youths were unemployed in 1979, 13.6 percent White youths, 35.8 percent Black youths, 19.5 percent Hispanic youths, and 19.2 percent Mexican-American youths. [58]

## H. POVERTY AND WELFARE DATA

The rate of poverty among Puerto Ricans was higher than that of other Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups.

### 1. Individuals in Poverty

In 1977, there were 707,000 individuals of Puerto Rican origin living below the poverty level. This constituted 38.8 percent of the Puerto Rican population, compared to 11.6 percent of the U.S. population living below the poverty level, 8.9 percent of the White population, 31.3 percent of the Black population, 22.4 percent of the Hispanic population, 21.1 percent of the Mexican-American population, and 15.8 percent of the Spanish-origin population.[59]

74.6 percent of persons in families headed by Puerto Rican women were in poverty, compared to 36.2 percent of persons in U.S. families, 56.7 percent of persons in Hispanic families, 49.7 percent of persons in Mexican-American families, and 44.7 percent of persons in other Spanish-origin families.[60]

In metropolitan poverty areas, 75.6 percent of individuals in Puerto Rican families headed by females were in poverty, compared to 60.1 percent of U.S. families headed by females, 54.2 percent of similar White families, 62.3 percent of similar Black families, 66.6 percent of similar Hispanic families, and 58.7 percent of Mexican-American families headed by females.[61]

### 2. Families in Poverty

39.5 percent of Puerto Rican families were in poverty, compared to 10.2 percent of U.S. families, 7.5 percent of White families, 30.5 percent of Black families, 21.9 percent of Hispanic families, 20.5 percent of Mexican-American families, and 14.7 percent of other Spanish-origin families.[62]

49.7 percent of Puerto Rican families with related children under 18 years of age were in poverty, compared to 16.0 percent of similar U.S. families, 11.4 percent of similar White families, 41.6 percent of similar Black families, 28.0 percent of similar Mexican-American families, and 18.3 percent of similar other Spanish-origin families.[63]

Of Puerto Rican families in metropolitan areas, 41.2 percent lived in poverty, compared to 9.1 percent of U.S. families, 6.3 percent of White families, 27.9 percent of Black families, 21.7 percent of Hispanic families, 19.4 percent of Mexican-American families, and 14.1 percent of other Spanish-origin families.[64]

In metropolitan areas, there were 593,000 Puerto Rican families headed by females; 75.8 percent of Puerto Rican female heads of families were in poverty, compared to 30.7 percent of U.S. female heads of families, 23.0 percent of White female heads of families, 48.8 percent of Black female heads of families, 64.3 percent of Hispanic female heads of families, and 57.2 percent of Mexican-American female heads of families.[65]

86.4 percent of children under 18 years of age in Puerto Rican families headed by females inside metropolitan areas were in poverty, compared to 48.8 percent of similar U.S. children, 38.7 percent of similar White children, 62.9 percent of similar Black children, 77.6 percent of similar Hispanic children, and 71.4 percent of similar Mexican-American children.[66]

### 3. Welfare Recipients

The data on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are available for Puerto Ricans and Hispanics in New York State. However, comparisons can be made using these data because, in 1979, over 50 percent of the Puerto Rican population resided in the New York area. Additionally, in 1977, 41.2 percent of the Puerto Rican families in metropolitan areas were in poverty, and 75.8 percent of Puerto Rican families headed by females were in poverty.[67]

In May, 1979, the number of AFDC families in the nation was 3,502,931, the number of recipients was 10,311,622, and the number of children was 7,192,252. In New York State, there were 364,046 AFDC families, 111,309 AFDC recipients, and 771,459 AFDC children.[68]

In 1977, Puerto Ricans constituted 33.4 percent of the AFDC caseload in New York City and 24.5 percent of the caseload in New York State.[69]

21.7 percent of recipients in the city were Hispanic; 49.4 percent of Hispanic welfare recipients, including 29,146 adults, were available for employment.[70]

21.9 percent of Hispanics in the city were unemployed; 33.9 percent of disadvantaged Hispanics were unemployed.[71]

In New York City, in 1978, 16.5 percent of Hispanics applied for unemployment insurance benefits; in New York State, 23.8 percent applied.[72]

## I. WOMEN DATA

There were 935,000 Puerto Rican women in the continental United States in March, 1979. The Puerto Rican female population is 54 percent of the total Puerto Rican population and 15.2 percent of the total Hispanic population.[73]

### 1. Age and Marital Status

In March, 1978, the median age of Puerto Rican women was 22.4 years, compared to 17.9 years for Puerto Rican males, 30.6 years for the total U.S. female population, 22.8 years for all Hispanic females, 21.3 years for Mexican-American females, 37.7 years for Cubans, 27.3 years for Central and South American females, and 23.4 years for other Hispanic females.[74]

Because the Puerto Rican population was very young, there was a high concentration of young women. 42.3 percent were under 18 years of age and 72.9 percent were under 35 years. Comparatively, 28.1 percent of U.S. women and 40.0 percent of Hispanic women were under 18 years of age; 46.3 percent of U.S. women and 71.7 percent of Hispanic women were under 35 years.

Of the 650,000 Puerto Rican women 14 years old and over, 27.2 percent were single, 56.4 percent were married, 5.8 percent were widowed, and 10.6 percent were divorced.[75]

### 2. Female Heads of Families

In March, 1978, 41 percent of the 437,000 Puerto Rican families were headed by women, compared to 10.2 percent of all U.S. families (1977), 20 percent of all Hispanic families, and 16 percent of Mexican-American families.[76]

Of all Puerto Rican families headed by females, 97.7 percent resided in metropolitan areas and 89.3 percent resided in central cities.[77] In March, 1975, 38 percent of the 477,000 Puerto Rican heads of household were women, compared to 23 percent of all Hispanic heads of household.[78] In 1977, 70.3 percent of all Puerto Rican female heads of families were in poverty, and 74.6 percent of Puerto Rican families headed by women were in poverty.[79] (See section on "Poverty" under this heading, for comparisons with other groups.)

### 3. Educational Attainment

In 1978, 32.5 percent of Puerto Rican women were high school graduates, compared to 38.2 percent of Hispanic women, 32.4 percent of Mexican-American women, and 52.4 percent of other Spanish-origin women.[80]

Of 650,000 Puerto Rican women 14 years of age and over, 12 percent completed 0 to 4 years of elementary school, 15.8 percent completed 5 to 7 years, and 12.5 percent completed 8 years of elementary school. 27.1 percent completed 1 to 3 years of high school and 23.5 percent completed 4 years or more of college; 32.5 percent completed high school and 9.0 percent completed high school and 1 or more years of college.[81]

4. Labor Force Participation

32.5 percent of Puerto Rican women 20 years of age and over were in the labor force in March, 1978, a considerably lower percentage than that of other women. 49.6 percent of the total U.S. female population were in the labor force, including 48.7 percent of White women, 55.4 percent of Black women, 47.1 percent of all Hispanic women, 48.5 percent of Mexican-American women, and 56.1 percent of Cuban women. [82]

5. Employment and Occupations

In March, 1978, of all Puerto Rican female workers, 12.2 percent were unemployed compared to 7.0 percent of all U.S. women, 10.4 percent of all Hispanic women, 11.4 percent of Mexican-American women, and 4.4 percent of Cuban women. [83]

In 1970 (latest data available), Puerto Ricans were the least likely of all Hispanic women to have had work experience. 34 percent of Puerto Rican wives and 24 percent of female heads of families worked at some time in 1970, as compared to 42 percent of all Hispanic wives and 47 percent of female heads of families. [84]

In 1978, of 173,000 Puerto Rican women 16 years of age and over, 28.4 percent were employed, compared to 50.1 percent of U.S. women, 40.6 percent of Hispanic women, 41.6 percent of Mexican-American women and 46.9 percent of Cuban women. [85]

Of the 173,000 Puerto Rican women employed in 1978, 56.3 percent were white-collar workers (34.4 percent were clerical workers), 30.9 percent were blue-collar workers, with a high concentration (27.3 percent) in operative jobs, 11.9 percent were service workers, and 0.9 percent were farm workers. [86]

In comparison, 64.9 percent of all U.S. women and 48.1 percent of all Hispanic women were white-collar workers, 14.5 percent of all U.S. women and 28.2 percent of Hispanic women were blue-collar workers, 20.5 percent of U.S. women and 22.6 percent of Hispanic women were service workers, and 1.1 percent of U.S. women and 1.1 percent of Hispanic women were farm workers. [87]

6. Unemployment

In March, 1979, of 179,000 Puerto Rican females in the labor force, 10.6 percent were unemployed, compared to 5.5 percent of U.S. women, 4.8 percent of White women, 9.9 percent of Black women, 9.8 percent of Hispanic women, 11.2 percent of Mexican-American women, and 6.6 percent of Cuban women. [88]

7. Income

In 1977, the median income of Puerto Rican women was $4,179, 62.2 percent of Puerto Rican women earned less than $5,000, 92.8 percent earned less than $10,000, and 99.1 percent earned less than $15,000. [89]

8. Poverty

In 1977, 41 percent of Puerto Rican families were headed by women. 74.6 percent of families headed by Puerto Rican women were in poverty, compared to 36.2 percent of U.S. families headed by women, 26.8 percent of similar White families, 55.3 percent of similar Black families, 56.7 percent of similar Hispanic families, 49.7 percent of similar Mexican-American families, and 44.5 percent of other Spanish-origin families headed by women. Also, 70.3 percent of Puerto Rican females who headed families were in poverty, compared to 24.0 percent of White females, 51.0 percent of Black females, 53.6 percent of Hispanic females, 45.9 percent of Mexican-American females, and 45.8 percent of other Spanish-origin females who headed families. [90]

82.2 percent of female-headed Puerto Rican families with related children under 18 years of age were in poverty. In comparison, 52.0 percent of female-headed U.S. families with related children under 18 years of age, 40.3 percent of similar White families, 65.7 percent of similar Black families, 68.6 percent of similar Hispanic families, 65.7 percent of similar Mexican-American families, and 54.4 percent of similar other Spanish-origin families, were in poverty. [91]

## J. YOUTH DATA

Because the Puerto Rican population is younger than the population of other groups, there is a larger concentration of youths among Puerto Ricans than among other groups. In March, 1979, the median age of Puerto Ricans was 19.9 years, and in March, 1978, when the median age of all Puerto Ricans was 20.3 years, the median age of Puerto Rican males was 17.9 years. The median age of Puerto Ricans, in 1979, was lower than in 1978, which indicates that there is a greater concentration of youths than before.

In March, 1979, 52.3 percent of the Puerto Rican population were under 21 years of age, compared to 34.6 percent of the U.S. population, 47.7 percent of the total Hispanic population, 47.5 percent of the Mexican-American population, 32.4 percent of the Cuban population, 40.0 percent of the Central and South American population, 51.0 percent of other Hispanic populations in the continental United States, and 33.9 percent of the non-Hispanic population. [92]

### 1. Youth Heads of Families

In 1977, of the 37,000 Puerto Rican families headed by individuals 14 to 24 years old, 51.4 percent (19,000) were in poverty, compared to 24.2 percent of all U.S. families headed by individuals 14 to 24 years of age, 18.3 percent of similar Mexican-American families, and 28.8 percent of similar families of other Spanish origin. [93]

### 2. Education of Youth-In-School and Youth-Out-of-School

In March, 1978, 7.1 percent of Puerto Rican youths 14 to 19 years of age completed 4 years of high school, compared to 12.2 percent of Hispanic youths and 12.2 percent of Mexican-American youths. [94]

Only 7.5 percent of Puerto Rican male youths 14 to 19 years of age completed high school, compared to 10.2 percent of Hispanic male youths and 10.6 percent of Mexican-American male youths. 6.7 percent of Puerto Rican female youths 14 to 19 years of age completed 4 years of high school, compared to 14.2 percent of Hispanic female youths and 13.7 percent of Mexican-American female youths. [95]

In October, 1978, 57.1 percent of all Hispanic youths, 58.2 percent of Hispanic male youths, and 55.2 percent of Hispanic female youths who were not in school, were not high school graduates. In comparison, 27.1 percent of all U.S. youths, 27.9 percent of U.S. male youths, and 26.1 percent of U.S. female youths who were not in school, were not high school graduates; and 33.0 percent of all Black youths, 32.0 percent of Black male youths, and 34.2 percent of Black female youths who were not in school, were not high school graduates. [96]

National figures for Puerto Rican youths who were out-of-school, non-high school graduates are not available. However, it can be deduced that the figures for Puerto Rican youths are even higher than those for Hispanic youths. 12.2 percent of all Hispanic youths - 10.2 percent males, and 14.2 percent females - completed 4 years of high school in March, 1978. However, only 7.1 percent of all Puerto Rican youths - 7.6 percent males and 6.7 percent females - completed high school. The figures for Hispanic youths who were not in school and were not high school graduates were 57.1 percent for all Hispanic youths, 58.2 percent males and 55.2 percent females. Therefore, the figures for Puerto Rican youths who were not in school and who were not high school graduates must be even higher. [97]

### 3. Labor Force Participation of Youth

In 1978, 37.3 percent of all Puerto Rican youths 16 to 19 years of age were in the labor force. In comparison, 58.0 percent of U.S. youth, 61.0 percent of White youth, 40.8 percent of Black youth, 49.6 percent of Hispanic youth, 52.3 percent of Mexican-American youth, and 29.0 percent of Cuban youth, were in the labor force. [98]

### 4. Youth Unemployment

In 1977, of 59,000 Puerto Rican youths in the labor force, 29.2 percent were unemployed, compared to 15.4 percent of U.S. youths, 38.6 percent of Black youths, 20.6 percent of Hispanic youths, and 19.4 percent of Mexican-American youths. [99]

5. Youths in Poverty

In Puerto Rican families headed by females, 82.6 percent (303,000) of children under 18 years of age, lived in poverty, compared to 68.6 percent of children in U.S. families headed by females, 62.6 percent of children in Mexican-American families headed by females, and 54.4 percent of other Hispanic children in families headed by females. [100]

In Puerto Rican families headed by females, 91 percent (108,000) of children under 6 years of age, were in poverty, compared to 76.1 percent of all children, and 73.4 percent of Mexican-American children. [101]

## K. HEALTH DATA

1. Health and Economic Opportunity

Racial minorities have almost twice the infant mortality of Whites.

The birth rate of the total U.S. population has been declining in recent years, but at a much faster rate among the White population than among racial minorities. The birth rate of racial minorities was one and a half times that of Whites in 1975, and it was higher than that experienced by Whites as long ago as 1940. [102]

Health care was made an important part of the War on Poverty because poor health was seen as an obstacle to economic opportunity. [103]

The most comprehensive health data on Puerto Ricans were available for New York City. Comparisons can be made for the national Puerto Rican population, because over 50 percent of the Puerto Rican population resided in the New York area.

2. Mortality Rates

In New York City, although the chief causes of death among Puerto Ricans and the total city population from 1969 to 1971 were heart diseases and malignant neoplasms, there was a higher mortality rate from cirrhosis of the liver, accidents, and diabetes among Puerto Ricans than among the total population. The average annual mortality rates from cirrhosis of the liver, accidents, and diabetes among Puerto Ricans were 40.4, 29.3, and 17.7 per 100,000 population, respectively, compared to 36.5, 27.8, and 25.4 among the total New York City population. The percentages of death from cirrhosis of the liver, accidents, and diabetes were 7.5, 4.9, and 2.9 percent, respectively, for Puerto Ricans, compared to 3.3, 2.5, and 2.3 percent, respectively, for the total New York City population. [104]

The average annual mortality rates from accidents, homicides, bronchitis, influenza, and pneumonia, were higher for Puerto Ricans under 15 years old than for the total population under 15. The average annual mortality rates from homicides, drug dependence, and accidents, were higher for Puerto Ricans in the age group 15 to 44 than for the total New York City population, and equal for cirrhosis of the liver. [105]

3. Selected Health Problems

The rates per 100,000 population of admissions to community mental health and mental retardation facilities for all psychiatric diagnoses were 2270.5 for Puerto Ricans, 2113.1 for Blacks, and 1067.9 for Whites, [106] whereas the rates for mental retardation were 85.7 for Puerto Ricans, 53.3 for Blacks, and 21.4 for Whites. [107]

From January 1 to September 30, 1971, the incidence of lead poisoning was 23.2 percent for Puerto Ricans, 60.2 percent for Blacks, 4.0 percent for others, and 12.6 percent unknown. [108]

4. Utilization of Health Services

Of those who visited outpatient departments of hospitals in the Southern New York Region in 1974, 28.8 percent were Hispanics, 36.9 percent were Blacks, and 31.8 percent were Whites. Of those who visited emergency rooms, 18.6 percent were Hispanics, 34.5 percent were Blacks, and 45.8 percent were Whites. [109]

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## ADDENDUM

### Puerto Ricans in New York City

New York City data are not as current as national data and, therefore, direct parallels cannot be drawn on a year to year basis. Nonetheless, data from the 1970 Census for New York City, in most cases the only data available, reflect the same profiles and patterns about the New York City Puerto Rican community evident in later national data.

Since conditions overall have worsened over the years, the lack of current New York City data distorts the local profiles. Data which can be correlated with national data indicate that the two studies, local and national, reflect the same status and conditions, especially since over half of the nation's Puerto Ricans in the mainland reside in New York City.

The parallels are further distorted by the population base used in different years, in local and national census data. For instance, in 1970 the Bureau of Census reported that there were 1,379,000 Puerto Ricans living in the mainland United States, with 811,800 living in New York City. Responding to charges of undercounting, in March, 1979, the Bureau reported that there were 1,748,000 mainland Puerto Ricans. In 1978 the Bureau showed a nationwide count of 1,823,000, and reduced that number to 1,748,000 in 1979. The figures for 1980 are unknown at this time.

Puerto Ricans are the youngest (19.9 years) ethnic group in the mainland United States, as reported in March, 1979. Similarly, all research and counts in New York City indicate that the Puerto Rican community is the youngest (21 years in 1970) ethnic group in the City.

The birth rate among Puerto Ricans nationwide and locally is the highest for all ethnic groups and, therefore, the community's median age has been dropping since 1970. The Puerto Rican community in New York City is about ten years younger than the national average, and even younger in terms of New York City overall population data. Latest (1970) New York City data showed that over half the Puerto Rican population was under 3[illegible] years of age. In 1978, nationwide census data showed 65.4 percent to be 29 years of age or younger.

The latest data (1970 Census) on New York City indicated that 29 percent of Puerto Rican families were headed by females. National data (March, 1978) note that 41.0 percent of Puerto Rican families were headed by females, with 74.6 percent of them in poverty. The New York City data in 1970 noted that 58 percent of Puerto Rican families headed by females were in poverty. Because there has been a sharp increase in the number of families headed by females in the United States, the differential can easily be accounted for between national and local data and base years. Welfare and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) data in New York City indicate that the number of Puerto Rican families with female heads is the same percentage as throughout the entire Puerto Rican community in the mainland United States. Further, since economic conditions in New York City and rates of unemployment reflect a serious loss of jobs over the years, the number of families with female heads must reflect, in terms of employment and poverty, local economic patterns.

In the 1970 Census it was reported that 49 percent of all Puerto Rican males aged 16-21 in New York City were not in school and not employed. National figures for Puerto Ricans are not available for comparison, but in 1978 only 37.3 percent of all Puerto Rican youths aged 16-19 were in the labor force, and 57.1 percent of all Hispanic youths were not in school. Overall, national data have shown that Puerto Rican youth employment has not changed over the years, while positive changes occurred in other ethnic sectors. In terms of new jobs created, this means that Puerto Rican youth employment decreased, and in New York City, with serious unemployment problems, it decreased more than the national averages.

In 1970, Puerto Ricans in New York City schools had an 80 percent dropout rate, in contrast to 49 percent for the total New York City population. Nationally, in 1978, Puerto Ricans 14

years of age and older had only a 31.9 percent rate of high school graduation. Data (1979) from the New York City Board of Education indicate that Puerto Ricans still have the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups in New York City.

Unemoloyment figures for New York City are distorted, as are national figures, since they are based on those in the labor force and not upon those of working age. For instance, the number of Puerto Rican women over 14 years of age in the labor force is roughly half that of other ethnic groups. To say that there is a 10 percent unemployment rate among Puerto Rican females distorts the truth. All those who are not in the labor force but should be, including large percentages of female heads of household and displaced homemakers, are not counted in labor force figures or unemployment data. Consequently, comparative data have no meaning.

The same can be said for youth employment and unemployment. In New York City, where youth unemployment represents a formidable problem, the number of youths who withdrew from the labor force is concealed in references to labor force counts. Nationally, in 1978, of the 608,000 Puerto Rican women 16 years of age and over, only 197,000 were reported in the labor force. The other 411,000 were not reported in the labor force.

Figures for poverty developed in recent national censuses apply as well to local communities. The poverty figures for Puerto Rican New Yorkers have always been extremely high. The loss of family earners and employment has increased the number of unemployed and, therefore, the number of Puerto Rican families that receive public assistance.

Overall, New York City data, while older than national data, establish that conditions for New York City's Puerto Ricans are as bad as or worse than national averages. Further, they are consistent with the argument that the Puerto Rican community is the worst off, both nationally and locally, and, therefore, the community most in need.